

War time Christmas at Sarratt Mill

In the early Forties, a group of young children, evacuees from blitz-threatened London, were sent away from their urban homes, to live in Sarratt Mill House. The house was offered by the then Duke of Bedford, as sanctuary for 20 children between 5 and 14 years old.

An early press photo, included in the Sarratt Scrapbook, shows the littlest ones looking timid. By Christmas, the fresh air, proper food and devotion of their young teachers, shows a very different scene, as the children sit on the distinctive central staircase of the house, confidently singing Carols, heads held high and eyes sparkling.

We have been visited by two of that group. The woman, who later worked on the iconic TV programme 'Play School', remembered Sarratt Mill as 'pure Paradise', where she still imagines herself to be, on a bad day. The man brought his wife to see the place where he and his friends had had such good fun as young boys. I wonder which carol they were singing and whether they were given Christmas stockings to hang up. It's lovely to think of their happy young voices echoing through the house at such a daunting time in their and our world.



Angela Colman